do nothing to improve them. In fact, he took at face value the assertion of the local Soviet that the arrested officers were in pretrial custody. This theory, however, was unacceptable to the government. The local Soviets had no legal right to take people into custody, investigate their crimes, or try them. Thus the Kronstadt Soviet was violating the law of the land. The press loudly lamented the fate of the prisoners in Kronstadt. However, the first Provisional Government lacked strength to curb the reign of lawlessness at the gate of the capital. The Coalition Government appointed a new Commissar for Kronstadt and instructed him to straighten out the situation of the prisoners. Soon after his appointment, he asked me to go to the fortress with him and talk to the people assembled in the main meeting place, the Yakor Plaza. The leaders of the local Soviet, he said, would also speak at the meeting and a frank discussion would contribute to the political education of the sailors.

Yakor Plaza was packed when I got there on May 29. I estimated the crowd at ten or fifteen thousand—two thirds of them sailors; the rest, soldiers and workers. The elevated platform was surrounded by a Bolshevist clique headed by Raskolnikov and Roshal, the leaders of the local Soviet, and Trotsky, whom they had invited as the spokesman of the left opposition in the Executive Committee. I began my address with the usual greeting from the Executive Committee and went on to describe our foreign and domestic policy.

My speech was interrupted repeatedly by cries of "Warmonger! Imperialist!" The crowd would keep quiet for a few minutes and then angry shouts would resume. Raskolnikov, a young navy officer with the expression of undaunted energy on his handsome face, conducted the chorus. His lieutenant, Roshal, was a youth of hardly more than seventeen, with ecstatic eyes, shrieking voice, and gesticulating arms —a perfect leader of a teen-age gang, although nattily dressed.

After my speech, a man in a ragged and dirty soldier's uniform climbed on the platform, a written note in his hand. "Here is the truth!" he screamed: "The new government has ordered the peasants to pay four hundred rubles for each acre of land. Is this a fair price? We never heard of such prices under the Tsar. How can a simple peasant like me get four hundred rubles?"

I asked the man who had told him that nonsense. He replied, "You would never tell the truth. But others, whom the poor people can trust, told me this."

A slick sailor came next. "The rich people and the officers profit from the war. Why should they make peace? We, the sailors, know how to end the war! Guns and officers overboard!"

He was followed by another sailor, a bearded man with a slow, deliberate way of talking. "Take, for example, Tseretelli. He is in